**Tori Penney**

**Edu 221-Dr. Grace**

**Essential Belief Statement**

My whole life I have known that teaching was my purpose, and that when I grew up it was the only thing I could do and still be happy. As children, my sister and I would always play school; needless to say, I was almost always the teacher, and I would torture her with multiplication worksheets which I would make and grade myself. Throughout all of my K-12 experience, I have been blessed with wonderful teachers, many of whom graduated from University of Maine at Farmington. They were all innovative, exciting, and made learning in the classroom something I always looked forward too. It was these teachers that displayed to me the power of a good educator, and that reassured me that education was the path for me.

At first, I believed that I would become an English teacher. I have always loved to read and write, and have always excelled in all of my English classes. Yet, my sophomore year in High School changed that. I had an amazing social studies teacher who, while at times went a little overboard, was the best teacher I have ever experienced. He would use these modern day analogies to explain concepts that were hard for the students to wrap their heads around, and he would tell these great anecdotes, throwing in extra information that would engage us in typically boring subjects. He opened my eyes to how important knowing about your country’s history is. Over time, I also came to the realization that social studies classes, whether they be history, sociology, psychology, etc., all teach about people and how they work; having the ability to understand people is something that is such an important and valuable skill, and like street smarts or common sense, this ability cannot usually be picked up in an academic settings.

As a learner, I develop best in highly musical, verbal, and spatial environment. This will probably reflect in my teaching methods through creative and innovative activities. My learning style was not limited to these three types, I am a very diverse learner and can learn in many ways, so I feel like I will be able to sympathize and understand most of the students learning styles and intelligences and will be able to integrate that into lesson plans as well as homework and projects. I plan to give my students multiple options for their larger projects, that way their grade is honestly reflective of their true learning and not their ability to wrap their head around the directions and requirements of the assignment. I believe this will be one of my biggest strengths as a teacher.

My goal as a teacher is more to be a mentor than just to be a mere knowledge dispenser, as I feel many teachers end up becoming. I know how important these years are for people; this is when they finally start understanding who they and begin grasping their sense of identity. It’s also their first experience with some of the responsibilities of being an adult. These things are both exciting and frightening for students, and it is important for someone other than a parent to be a model and a resource for them, whether it is a neighbor, a guidance counselor, or a teacher. Personally, my teachers were usually exactly that for me, and they were fantastic at that part of their jobs. Being a part of this important phase in these students’ lives is the true reason why I want to be a teacher. My fear about becoming a teacher is that my lack of social skills with affect my teaching too strongly, I am a horrible public speaker and have always had a hard time articulating myself. Whether it is with feelings or names, since I was a child I have had a hard time remembering how to pronounce words. Generally, I have overcome this shortfall through speech therapy, but sometimes it still creeps up on me. I just hope that this won’t be a problem with presenting a lesson to a class.

Through EDU 221 I hope to achieve many of the skills that Farmington teachers are known for, such as innovative thinking and the ability to get students interested and wanting to participate. Twice I have been in a classroom before where I wasn’t the student, so I have in class experience, but it was nowhere as close to what I will experience in the classroom during this semester. These two opportunities did not teach me many of the skills of classroom management, or how to develop lesson plans that are complex enough and have enough dimensions to reach all of the students, but simple enough as to not be overwhelming. It is these skills that I hope to get the most of throughout this semester.